

Deaf Services Commission of Iowa

Iowa Department of Human Rights

Strategic Plan

Fiscal Years 2007 – 2012



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Mission

Our Motivation is to Serve, Represent & Provide a Greater Understanding of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals at Any Age Across the State.

Vision

Equal Communication, Education and Access

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Basic Description

Deaf Services Commission of Iowa (DSCI) exists to address the social, emotional, and communication aspects of hearing loss. The State of Iowa established the agency in 1975 with the purpose of improving the quality of life of deaf and hard of hearing people in Iowa through coordination, implementation, and provision of services to the community. The agency is a division of the Iowa Department of Human Rights.

DSCI is a link to accessibility, services, resources, and information on deaf and hard of hearing issues in Iowa. DSCI encourages existing programs and services to be accessible. We assist in the establishment of new programs and services for deaf and hard of hearing citizens through partnerships with other agencies and organizations.

Iowans are provided with education, information, assistance, and consultation on issues related to hearing loss. DSCI maintains a print and video library on deafness as well as publications and other informational resources. Technical assistance is provided to the community in several areas such as educating businesses and individuals on communication access for deaf and hard of hearing people that may include hiring sign language or oral interpreters.

Customers

DSCI categorizes customers into two segments: primary customers and secondary customers. Primary customers include people who are identified as deaf, hard of hearing, deaf blind, and late deafened. While the agency serves all people who experience a hearing loss, the primary focus is on the psychosocial aspects of hearing loss rather than medical issues. Secondary customers include businesses, government, interpreters, parents, and professionals working with our primary customers.

“The deaf and hard of hearing community is very diverse, differing greatly on the cause and degree of hearing loss, age at the onset, educational background, communication methods, and how they feel about their hearing loss. How a person “labels” themselves in terms of their hearing loss is personal and may reflect identification with the deaf community or merely how their hearing loss affects their ability to communicate.” (National Association of the Deaf)

The cultural identity of the deaf community is one of “group” rather than of “self.” This value carries through to the group’s expectations of those who work with them. If DSCI’s staff is not perceived as members of the deaf community, consumers will hesitate to trust, cooperate, and ultimately not access the agency’s services. Ultimately trust lies within effective communication. It is imperative that the DSCI staff is fluent in American Sign Language to meet the needs of all of our primary customers.

Internal Strengths and Limitations

DSCI does well in the areas of long-range thinking and employee participation. We believe that we do well in the areas of collaborative leadership, customer focus, and continuous improvement. Our major limitation lies in our lack of census data and national benchmarks. This lack of data hinders our ability to make confident data-based decisions.

Strategy Development

Commissioners and staff actively seek input from the public on future planning. Needs assessments, town meetings, and public hearings are used to solicit ideas. For fifteen years the Commission has sponsored a youth leadership program comprised of students from across the state with a variety of hearing losses. These students bring an Iowan youth perspective to policy making by submitting recommendations to the Commission on improving the quality of life for deaf and hard of hearing people in their state. In addition, the agency participated in the Iowa Excellence initiative in 2001. Information from the assessment that was completed along with feedback from examiners outside of the agency was used to identify opportunities to improve the agency. A plan was written and is being implemented to address the most critical area for improvement identified by the agency, developing clear measures to guide all aspects of operations. The process of developing measures includes those in this strategic plan as well as the agency's annual performance plans. The strategic plan is reviewed on an annual basis. Today, staff is using a matrix to outline goals, strategies, action steps, assignments, timelines, and outcomes for each part of the strategic plan. The Commission and staff review this on a quarterly basis and communicate progress with customers via print and at public hearings.

Core Functions, Goals, Measures and Strategies

Core Functions:

- Advocacy
- Community Coordination and Development

Goal 1 : Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf Blind, and Late Deafened people advocate for their needs

Measure: Percentage of citizens who self advocate after training or assistance

Strategies:

A. Assist primary customers with ADA compliance issues

B. Provide education opportunities for primary customers

Goal 2: Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf Blind, and Late Deafened children and adults have life skills to be productive, equal members of society

Measure: Percent of individuals attending training that report training goals were met

Strategies:

- A. Continue to support networks and maintain informational resources for parents of children who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf Blind, and Late Deafened*
- B. Provide training opportunities focusing on life skills that are necessary to become productive members of society*

Goal 3: Iowans have information on hearing loss to provide appropriate accommodations for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf Blind, and Late Deafened people

Measure: Percentage of organizations and agencies that make services accessible after receiving information, training, and/or technical assistance

Strategies:

- A. Develop, maintain, and distribute information and resources on issues related to hearing loss*
- B. Provide support and technical assistance to organizations and agencies to establish accessible services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf Blind, and Late Deafened citizens*
- C. Provide training opportunities for the public to learn how to make services and activities accessible to Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf Blind, and Late Deafened people*

Goal 4: Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf Blind, and Late Deafened Iowans have access to culturally affirmative services

Measure: Percentage of customers who access information and services

Strategies:

- A. Provide educational opportunities for primary customers*
- B. Develop ways for primary customers to access information in their native language*
- C. Facilitate access to quality interpreting services in Iowa*
- D. Provide consultation services to primary customers*
- E. Maintain various forms of data on Iowans with a hearing loss*
- F. Establish access to mental health and substance abuse treatment services*
- G. Continue to support and increase access to quality health care services established previously and seek new opportunities*
- H. Establish quality living options and services for seniors, adults with disabilities and those at risk of abuse*